

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 BELFAS 00028 191417Z

42

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1159

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: CONVENTION CHAIRMAN BEGINS MEETINGS WITH PARTIES

REF: BELFAST 027

1. IN PREPARATION FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION RECONVENING, CHAIRMAN SIR ROBERT LOWRY IS MEETING SEPARATELY TODAY WITH LEADERS OF UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP). HE WILL MEET WITH OTHER SMALLER PARTIES IN ENSUING DAYS.

2. WHITE PAPER IN FORM OF LETTER FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MERLYN REES TO SIR ROBERT LOWRY WAS ISSUED JAN. 16. IT ASKS CHAIRMAN RECONVENE CONVENTION FEB. 3 AND HOPES THAT FOUR WEEK PERIOD WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CONSIDERATION OF (THREE) MATTERS CAN LEAD TO AN AGREEMENT ENABLING GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION IN PARLIAMENT TO PROVIDE NORTHERN IRELAND WITH ITS OWN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AGAIN. THREE MATTERS ARE:

(A) HOW BEST AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED ON A SYSTEM OF
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PAGE 02 BELFAS 00028 191417Z

GOVERNMENT BUILT ON THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THERE IS

ALREADY WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT, AND PROVIDING FOR A FORM OF PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION, AND WHICH WILL COMMAND THE MOST WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND IN BOTH PARTS OF THAT COMMUNITY.

(B) WHETHER A COMMITTEE SYSTEM MIGHT BE OF VALUE AS PART OF A WIDER AND ACCEPTABLE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK.

(C) WHETHER PROGRESS COULD BEST BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH, THOUGH NOT TEMPORARY, IS CAPABLE OF EVOLVING OVER A PERIOD OF TIME INTO PERMANENT AND AGREED CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS.

SECSTATE REES EXPECTED PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN PHASE TWO CONVENTION.

3. ALTHOUGH RUMORS PERSIST THAT UUUC IN SOME DISARRAY THERE NO EVIDENCE THAT CONVENTION MAJORITY THREATENED BY DEFECTIONS. ON CONTRARY, PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY ALL UNIONISTS INDICATE UUUC WILL PRESERVE UNITED FRONT AND INSIST ON ACCEPTANCE FIRST CONVENTION REPORT. THERE GROWING PESSIMISM EVEN IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT GOVERNMENT OR PARLIAMENT WILL GRANT SELF-GOVERNMENT ON UNIONIST TERMS HOWEVER. OFFICIAL UNIONIST JOHN TAYLOR HAS SADLY FORECAST DISAPPEARANCE OF MOST POLITICIANS FROM PUBLIC LIFE. MOST SPECULATION FORESEES PROLONGED DIRECT RULE WITH GOVERNMENT RESORTING TO REFERENDUM ON EMERGENCY COALITION EXECUTIVE AT SOME POINT. LOYALISTS HAVE POINTED OUT EVEN POSITIVE REFERENDUM RESULTS COULD BE MADE MEANINGLESS BY SUBSEQUENT ELECTION RETURNING LOYALIST MAJORITY. THERE VERY LITTLE EXPECTATION THAT HMG WOULD AGAIN ATTEMPT IMPOSE APPOINTED EXECUTIVE.

4. LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES IN ULSTER ARMY COUNCIL AND UNITED ULSTER LOYALIST COORDINATING COMMITTEE - MOST COMPRISED OF THE SAME INDIVIDUALS - HAVE IMPOSED GAG ON MEMBERS RULING THAT ALL PUBLIC STATEMENTS WOULD COME FROM POLITICIANS. THIS IS SEEN AS FURTHER ADVANCE FOR POLICIES IAN PAISLEY OVER WILLIAM CRAIG AND GLENN BARR WHO FAVOR EMERGENCY COALITION.
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PAGE 03 BELFAS 00028 191417Z

SOME PARAMILITARIES APPRENTLY ACTIVE IN OTHER ARENAS (REFTEL). MID-ULSTER LOYALIST ARMY COUNCIL MADE CHILLING ANNOUNCEMENT JAN. 17 THAT UNLESS CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN SOUTH ARMAGH DOES NOT REJECT THE GUNMEN THERE SOON "WE WILL HIT BACK THREE-FOLD." SPOKESMAN CONTINUED THAT LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES HAD "DETAILS OF AT LEAST 10 MINIBUSES WHICH CARRY CATHOLICS FROM SOUTH ARMAGH TO BUILDING SITES IN MID-ULSTER." OFFICIAL UNIONIST LEADER HARRY

WEST MADE ATTEMPT TO SEPARATE POLITICS FROM SECTARIANISM
IN BELFAST SPEECH JANUARY 16. HE DENIED THAT EITHER
CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS IN CONVENTION REPORT OR UNIONIST
PARTY REJECT OR EXCLUDE ANYBODY FROM HIGHEST OR ANY OTHER
LEVEL OF PUBLIC AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY ON RELIGIOUS
GROUNDS.

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